



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Glacier National Park
International Peace Park
Biosphere Reserve
World Heritage Site

P.O. Box 128
West Glacier, MT 59936
www.nps.gov/glac/home.htm

406 888-7800 phone
406 888-7808 fax

Glacier National Park News Release

July 15, 2003

For Immediate Release

Amy Vanderbilt 406 888-7906

Tony Clark 406 888-7895

NEWS03-58

Finding of No Significant Impact Signed for Rehabilitation of Belton Bridge

Work to begin this fall

WEST GLACIER, MONT.—Glacier National Park Superintendent Mick Holm today announced that the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the environmental assessment (EA) to rehabilitate the Belton Bridge in Glacier National Park was signed by National Park Service Intermountain Region Systems Support Office Superintendent Hal Grovert on Friday, July 11. A copy of the finding will be available for viewing on the park's website at www.nps.gov/glac/plans.htm.

Glacier National Park (GNP) plans to rehabilitate the Belton Bridge to improve its structural integrity and make it available for pedestrian, horse, and bicycle traffic across the Middle Fork of the Flathead River. The bridge is located one-half mile east of the GNP Headquarters area. In addition to rehabilitating the bridge, the project calls for gravel surfacing approximately one-half mile of the Belton Entrance Road trail between the bridge and the GNP Headquarters area, which is used as a pedestrian, horse, and bicycle path.

The Belton Bridge served as the primary west side entrance to the park from 1920 until 1938, when a new bridge was constructed downstream. In June 1964, a flood destroyed the replacement bridge and washed away all but the concrete arch of Belton Bridge. The park constructed a timber trestle bridge atop the concrete arch to provide a west side entrance until a new downstream bridge could be built. When the new bridge was completed in 1966, the Belton Bridge was again closed to vehicular traffic. By 2000, the condition of the Belton Bridge had so deteriorated that it was closed to pedestrian traffic as well.

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

Glacier National Park prepared an Environmental Assessment for the project in 2001. The EA outlined a two-phase rehabilitation project. Under Phase I, the bridge's abutments and retaining wing walls were reconstructed. That work was completed in 2002.

Phase II calls for removal of the existing timber trestle bents, decking, and guardrails, rehabilitation of the concrete arch, and replacement of the bents, decking, and guardrails with new materials. Because so much of the bridge material needs to be replaced, GNP found that the project would have an adverse effect on the characteristics that qualify the bridge for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and therefore a new Environmental Assessment was prepared.

To mitigate the adverse effect of the project on a National Register eligible property, GNP will create a wayside exhibit to interpret the Belton Bridge. The exhibit will discuss the original entrance road and adjacent area, the bridge and its history and the effects of the 1964 flood. Under an agreement with the State Historic Preservation Officer, the GNP also will create a second exhibit to provide information about the Boundary Trail, including regulations for its use.

Glacier National Park officials believe the abandoned Belton Entrance Road qualifies for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and plan to treat the road as a cultural resource. Its 1930's appearance as a historic, graveled road will be maintained, but it will be limited to pedestrian, horse and bicycle use.

Construction is expected to occur between mid-September 2003 and April 2004.

-NPS-